

PEOPLE & THINGS

IT is impossible to say where the tragedy of myxomatosis will end or what price nature will make us pay for tampering with its laws, but I was sorry to see that, a few days ago, we rejected a wonderful opportunity to make at least some amends when Mr. James Stuart, Secretary of State for Scotland, announced to the House that the Government was unable to recommend the introduction of a close season for red deer.

Butchers of the Glen

THERE are 100,000 red deer in Scotland and they are Britain's largest and perhaps most graceful wild fauna. And yet we are the only civilised country in the world which does not protect them when they are carrying their young.

The mating season, one of the most thrilling and awe-inspiring spectacles that can be witnessed in these islands, has just finished, and, with the approach of snow, the stags and hinds will soon be searching for food in the lower pastures. There they will make easy targets for the farmer and for the poaching gangs who drive out from the towns to slaughter and wound them with whatever weapons they can muster.

It is with a feeling of shame that one reads the facts set out in the White Paper and learns that, due to a minority report signed by three members out of a committee of nine, eight months of cruelty to these beautiful animals has once again set in.

Wild Easterns

THE Chinese talent for euphemism—which displays itself in the official description of the Kuomintang security police as the "Bureau for Statistics and Research"—seems to have infected some of their American collaborators in Formosa.

The most formidably protected building on the island, even more heavily guarded than Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's headquarters, is the "spook house." The identity of its tenants would be a complete mystery if it were not for the regular delivery of supplies, routed through Hong-kong, addressed to "Western Enterprises."

Senior officers of the American military mission in Formosa disclaim any knowledge of Western Enterprises. Less senior, and less discreet officers speak of it with the hilarious disrespect reserved by regulars for all "private armies."

One gathers that a more appropriate name would be "Wild" Western Enterprises.

The Pioneer

HENRI MATISSE, the great painter who died last Wednesday, was, oddly enough, one of the first motorists, and in the early years of the century he astonished his friends by proceeding in his own motor along the then-unfrequented coast road from Nice to Roquebrune. That he prudent in all things, should take to the hazardous novelty was a great surprise.

"But what do you do," they asked, "if you meet another car coming the opposite way?"

"If that should ever occur," said Matisse, "I shall bring my car to a halt, get down, and sit in a field until the other has passed."

By ATTICUS



A Royal Gift

WHEN the Queen Mother ends her stay at the White House she will present General Eisenhower with a charming personal token—one of the most beautiful books published in England since the war.

This is the "Album de Redouté," sumptuously produced by Collins and containing twenty-five facsimile colour plates chosen by Sacheverell Sitwell and Roger Madox from the original edition of 1824. This edition was dedicated to the Duchesse de Berry and included engravings from Redouté's famous "Les Roses" and "Les Liliacées."

The circular wreath, reproduced, alas, in monochrome above, was the frontispiece for "Les Roses." It originally enclosed Greek verses printed in gold, but has been adapted for the Collins folio which has now made such an auspicious first crossing of the Atlantic.

Perish the Thought

IT is extraordinary what a knack scientists have for telling us bad news. Having apparently invented the science of "liminology"—the study of lakes and rivers—Dr. Forel, of the University of Lausanne, and Professor Jaag, of the Zurich Institute of Hydrobiology, announced last week in Geneva that all our lakes are "seriously ill," that Loch Lomond has only another 45,000 years to live, and that Loch Ness will "perish" even sooner.

Industrial waste and sewage are apparently disrupting the internal equilibrium of our lakes, the top "layers" of which require 111 milligrams of oxygen and the lower "layers" progressively fewer milligrams per cubic metre.

The descending movement of this oxygen combined with the upward emanations from fish and vegetation are the "breath" of the lake and it is this "breath" that is being slowly strangled by pollution.

I await with confidence the issue of corrective legislation by some busy international body as a result of which our lakes will overflow and we shall all be drowned.

Opening at Epidaurus

THE European festival-season now extends in time, from March till October, and on the map from Wexford to the borders of the Black Sea. But I fancy that, even in this overcrowded pro-

gramme, there will be a special place for next summer's newcomer: the festival of music and drama in the classical theatre at Epidaurus.

This theatre, which Pausanias regarded as the loveliest in all Greece, can seat 14,000 spectators. If there is, in the event, a capacity house for next summer's performances, I foresee a mammoth *crise de logement* in the under-populated region around Epidaurus. The ultra-modern, asymmetrical hotel at Nauplion will hold only a tiny proportion of the visitors; and I hear that special loans, free of interest, are being offered to those householders who wish to repair and redecorate their spare rooms in the interest of Festival visitors.

Classical students, remembering that Epidaurus was the Lourdes of the ancient world and the seat of Aesculapius, the god of healing, envisage a revival of the dormitory system of which traces are still to be seen within the boundaries of the original city.

Signs of Fame (2)

MY reference last Sunday to inn signs depicting contemporary heroes has flushed the following: General Smuts, Shepherd's Bush; Earl Beatty, Molsport Park; Earl Haig, Hounslow; Marie Lloyd, Hoxton; Spurs, Tottenham; Blenheim (Derby winner), Epsom; Mid-day Sun (Derby winner), Warrington; Comet, Hatfield; Dover Patrol, Kidbrooke; Marshal Foch, Birmingham; General Allenby, Winterborne Zelstone; White Bear (Brumas), Hampstead; Jet and Whittle, Lower Tuffley.

Cutting a Dash

VERY few perquisites go with an ambassadorship to the Court of St. James's, but in case there is an adventurous foreign envoy who feels a sudden urge to assert himself, I think he will find that he possesses the ancient privilege, long unexercised, of telling his chauffeur to take the short cut from the Horse Guards Parade into Whitehall by means of the Archway.

What's My Line?

"—Is, in part, the evaluation of blades of grass, the careful contemplation of grains of sand; the extra-sensory perception of the whims of air currents; the instrumentless survey of slopes and vales rocks and rills. Its players flicker back and forth between worlds of nervelessness and nervousness, between states of suspended and explosive animation, executing a succession of three-dimensional forays inside a vast terrarium."

The word I have omitted from this opening paragraph of a leader in last week's American "Sports Illustrated" is "Golf."

Sit. Vac.

AN American concert impresario, dictating a programme to his new secretary, instructed her to expand all abbreviations—e.g., Op. into Opus—before sending the programme off to the printer.

In the printer's proof he was in time to correct the following item: "Bach: Massachusetts in E Minor."